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*Series of Cases of Acute Dysentery.* By W.  
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Printed from the "*Australian Medical Journal*," October, 1864.

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However excellent European ideas may be, and however fashionable may be to give "new doctors" credit for most knowledge, it must be admitted that the diseases peculiar to Australia, are not to be found anywhere else. The profession is aware that there are essential points of difference in disease produced by climatic influence; and to the mastery of these differences there is no royal road, no sure path but experience. Familiarity with disease leads to the shortest method of restoring health, that "consummation so devoutly wished" by the sick, and that sure foundation of success for the practitioner.

But in the history of medicine, there ever has been an antagonism between theory and practice, between empiricism and rationalism; and formularies and traditionary creeds of the action of remedies have been debated, and doubted, and dissent exists in medicine as in geology. Hence we see almost as a rule, that as experience matures judgment, dependence on medication is diminished, and is transferred to other means of assisting nature, such as repose, the removal of exciting causes, regimen, fresh air, support, &c. I am so pleased with an article, in a late number of the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, that I cannot better support my own views than by a quotation. "A striving after simplicity is the order of the day, the efficiency of the natural process of recovery, when aided by a few appropriate remedies, is more widely recognized," &c.

In a paper which appeared last year in this journal, I expressed myself that the great fact to be observed in the treatment of Acute Dysentery is, that "the tendency of this disease is to recovery." That this is not the only acute disease of which this can be said, all true observers know; and this truth has been stated by various writers. It has been seized upon moreover by the disciples of

Hahnemann, and acted upon, and demonstrated beyond doubt, but with this difference, that the restoration of the normal condition is by them attributed to doses imperceptible to the senses, or to the analyst; and the powers of the creator are impiously ascribed to the creature. It cannot however be re-iterated too often, for even now prescriptions ordering scruple doses of calomel are heard of, and the word anti-phlogistic still means bloodletting, purging, and antimony, followed by mercury, and blisters, leading to a shattered constitution, and protracted recovery. But, it may be remarked, that the treatment adopted in the early cases presented in the synopsis, was heroic enough. To this I must reply, that the conversion has been gradual, and that the avowal of the truth is not always agreeable. It will be observed that the age of the youngest is three years, and it may be wondered that with such an amount of infantile disease as presents every season, I have not recorded cases of dysentery as occurring among infants, especially when the general features are so similar in the frequent discharge of blood and mucus, with tenesmus. I grant a general resemblance, and I admit that the term dysentery is applied by many to this affection of children at the breast. I have had opportunities of examining the intestines of several infants, who died with the symptoms of dysentery: in all, the small intestines were affected for a greater or less distance from the junction of the colon, with increased vascularity of the membrane, tumefaction, and frequently softening. I do not possess notes of these examinations. They were made some years ago when the affection was new to me, but their ages varied from nine months to two and a-half years. I have then been led to the opinion that true colitis does not exist much before three years, and that the ailment attacking before this, and simulating colitis, is, strictly speaking, a complication of euteritis and colitis, with more or less gastritis: rather a formidable string of names, but not more formidable on paper than in reality.

It is a satisfactory result, that no fatal case has occurred among sixty-three cases. They followed in succession—none are omitted; they extended over seven years' practice, and among 7,800 cases of all kinds requiring treatment. All were undoubted examples of colitis, many most severe, and all diarrhoeas were carefully omitted. I cannot therefore call attention to the frequency of this disease; on the contrary, it is much less so than diphtheria. The popular opinion that any looseness of the bowels is dysentery, has led in a great measure to this error in the estimate of its frequency, and may have had some influence, we cannot say how much or how little, in keeping back from our really salubrious climate, the tide of emigration which politicians are bidding for, and which is at once a cause and an effect of prosperity. We may then consider that our first proposition is demonstrated—*Dysentery is not a dangerous disease, its natural termination if properly assisted, being recovery.*

Thirteen cases occurred in the month of March, and one in June; but the data are too limited for any inference on this point. Forty-eight patients were males, and fifteen females, which warrants a

second proposition, thus : *Men are more liable to be attacked by Dysentery than women.*

I heard Professor Christison say many years ago, at the bedside : "Gentlemen, the physician's difficulty is to make out the disease, when that is discovered there is no doubt as to the treatment." How far time has modified the views of that learned toxieologist we cannot say, but his words may yet possess an amount of truth they did not when uttered.

It will be seen that I have in four cases administered Homœopathic remedies, Globules of Mercurius Corrosivus and Acidum Nitricum, were given for some days without any sensible effect. The propriety of this proceeding may be called in question, but it must be remembered that we are constantly urged to a trial, and the results of this mode of treatment have been so eulogised, that I considered it perfectly justifiable.

In the 13th edition of the *Homœopathic Domestic Medicine*, by Joseph Laurie, M D, &c., &c. page 212, it is said : "Mercurius Corrosivus may be considered to be the most important of all the Homœopathic remedies in Dysentery, but especially when the subjoined symptoms are present, it may generally be considered specific to the case ; in the red dysentery or bloody flux, when we find *severe straining*, with evacuations merely of a little mucus, sometimes succeeded by or accompanied with the protrusion of a portion of the intestine and increased discharge of pure blood," &c.

The tenesmus continued so distressing that I did not feel at liberty to continue treatment which gave *no* relief ; I therefore resorted to suppositories of domestic soap and opium, with the usual happy effect. Every precaution was adopted, the treatment was undertaken in good faith, and three of the four did not know what was being administered.

I have long abandoned the use of enemata of all kinds ; I found the irritation produced in my own case so distressing, and believed that their action was so local, that they presented no advantage over suppositories, which will be found to answer all that can be said in their favour. I generally direct one to be introduced after every motion, and regulate the strength to the age.

A reference to the synopsis will show that the latter half have all been treated by Sulphuric Acid and Tincture of Opium, occasional suppositories when tenesmus existed, repose, and alcohol from the first. Whatever success then may have attended a treatment by mercurials, it must be admitted, that there were no failures among *these*, and that if only the result be equal, there can be no doubt as to the safest and most agreeable plan. The mildest action of the mineral on the system is attended with unpleasantness, while idiosyncrasy of constitution may at any time exhibit severe pyalism from small doses. The time approaches when this poison in every form will be banished from our prescriptions, not only in acute dysentery, but in all other acute and chronic diseases. Advanced minds have already done so, the routinists must follow or lose their patients.

Now about this treatment by Acid : I gave it at one time in combination with Sulphate of Magnesia, which I have long discontinued. The Homœopaths of the latest school, who treat by similars without regard to the infinitesimal doses of the founder, may point to this as an illustration of their principle. They may say, acids gripe and produce dysentery, and acids will cure the same. Be it so : a discussion on this point would be an intrusion on the space of this article, but it may commend itself to the consideration of the profession. I may say in passing, however, that the occurrence of an occasional homœopathic relationship between diseases and remedies is not denied, its universality is called into question, and its applicability in all stages of all diseases. Dr. Ridge, in his work, *Health and Disease*, p. 190, strongly advocates Nitrous Acid in this complaint, on the principle, "That it is an inflammatory disease, and it is needful to furnish fresh supplies of the acids which are every hour flying off from the system, and upsetting the balance of the law of health."

I was informed by one lady that she attributed her attack to soda cake, which always acted as a purgative, but this time had produced acute symptoms. This was not her first attack. The treatment in her cases was by acid, and she stated that her recovery had on no former occasion been so rapid. Dr. Henderson in his report of the Shanghai Hospital for 1862, says : "On examining the blood of some patients suffering from dysentery and comparing it with blood from the healthy, the former gave a much more decided alkaline reaction than the latter ; the urine also exhibited an alkaline reaction in typhoid cases, thus indicating a condition of super-alkalinity in the body, or at least a deficiency of acid. This led me to adopt an acid mode of treatment, which proved decidedly beneficial and successful." I may therefore consider my third proposition established, namely, *Dysentery does not require active treatment, the administration of acids by different practitioners in various countries, has been attended with marked success in favouring recovery.*

The duty of the physician, however, is not confined to writing prescriptions ; we have in Australia ventured to dissociate the dispensing from the prescribing, and we no longer lay ourselves open to the charge of ordering medicine to make up our bills, the attendance only being charged for. Some wiseacre, during a late discussion in one of the Melbourne daily papers, wrote : "What doctor would ever think of paying a first visit, without writing the inevitable prescription?" It is done daily nevertheless : advice about diet and simple remedies are as valuable as drugs, and in the subject of this paper, the most essential part of the treatment is *repose*—rest for the bowels. I have not yet tried the treatment of this affection without medication ; but I would infinitely prefer it to being blistered, leeches, and salivated. "Crede experto !"

The less that passes down to trouble the colon, and the less its mucous surface is harassed, the sooner will it heal, and the less will the sufferer be called on to bear. But nature, while she is not opposed, must be supported, and the best means of doing this will



be by animal broths ; but these I have found to irritate, and to increase the frequency of the stools, unless thickened. Arrowroot will answer, but not so well as wheaten flour, the gluten of which, adds to the nutrient quality of the soup, gives the bowels nothing to do, and is speedily converted into chyle. But even with the strongest broths thus given, the pulse will be found to diminish in volume and in frequency day by day, and as the struggle may be a long one, look a-head. I have had recourse to alcohol early, and of the various forms I have selected the best brandy, and have given it liberally. I have never seen any ill effects from its use.

Great discretion must be exercised in the giving of tonics, until all acute symptoms have passed away. I may again say, "Crede experto." I was doing well, the stools were diminishing in frequency, and becoming natural, when to satisfy a desire for liquids, I ventured on a little Tincture of Columba in water. I was sensible of burning pain for some hours, and the stools increased in frequency ; the nature of the pain convinced me that the bitter, gentle as it was, had produced a determination to the mucous membrane of the entire track, passing down and not being entirely taken up in the stomach, as the brandy appears to be. I may state my last proposition thus :—

*It is essential that the whole alimentary canal be kept in as perfect a state of repose as possible, and that the system be supported from the first.*

SYNOPSIS OF SIXTY-THREE CASES OF ACUTE DYSENTERY,  
WITH TREATMENT AND RESULTS.

NO.	AGE.	SEX.	TREATMENT.	RESULT.
24	26	M.	Hydrag. Chlor. P. Doveri	Recovered.
88	29	M.	" "	"
90	40	M.	" "	"
150	32	F.	" c. Opio	"
161	23	M.	" "	"
204	24	M.	Homœopathy first, then as above Emp. Lyttæ to abdomen.	"
205	27	M.	Homœopathy first, then as above	"
219	30	F.	Hyd. Chlor. c. Opio	"
225	29	M.	" "	"
275	34	F.	Homœopathy first, then as above	"
693	6	M.	Hyd. Chlor. c. Opio	"
714	38	M.	" "	"
748	64	M.	" " Injectious	"
1113	28	M.	" "	"
1205	36	M.	Homœopathy first, then leeches, blis- ter, Hydrag. Ch. c. Opio	"
1307	27	M.	Enemata. Hyd. Chlor. c. Opio	"
1319	8	F.	" "	"
1361	22	M.	" "	"
1575	25	F.	" "	"
1607	34	M.	" " & suppositories	"
1610	28	M.	" "	"
1765	39	M.	" "	"
1768	41	F.	" "	"
1948	26	M.	" "	"
2022	36	F.	" "	"
2650	29	M.	" "	"
2701	37	M.	" "	"
2720	26	M.	" "	"
2810	30	M.	" "	"
2990	21	M.	" "	"
3833	27	M.	" "	"
3926	42	F.	" "	Not known.
3977	31	M.	Taken out of my hands. Acid. Sulph. Mag. Sulph. Tinct. Opii suppositories	Recovered.
4109	37	M.	" " "	"
4203	34	F.	" " "	"
5082	38	M.	" " "	"
5092	34	M.	" " "	"
5346	36	F.	Acid. Nitros. Bismuth, suppositories	"
5350	32	M.	Acid. Sulph. Mag. Sulph. Tinct. Opii	"
5598	27	M.	" " "	"
5645	6	M.	" " "	"
5697	30	M.	Acid. Sulphuric, Tinct. Opii "	"
5800	9	M.	" " "	"
6034	33	F.	" " "	"
6045	28	M.	" " "	"
6072	26	F.	" " "	"
6088	35	F.	" " & suppositories	"
6110	27	M.	" " "	"
6178	39	M.	" " "	"
6223	36	F.	" " "	"

## CASES OF ACUTE DYSENTERY.—(Continued.)

NO.	AGE.	SEX.	TREATMENT.	RESULT.
6250	29	M.	Acid. Sulphuric., Tinct. Opii.	Recovered.
6259	34	F.	" "	"
6343	37	M.	" "	"
6622	43	M.	" "	"
7023	10	M.	" "	"
7113	38	M.	" "	"
7141	35	M.	" "	"
7184	40	M.	" "	"
7186	8	M.	" "	"
7345	30	M.	" "	"
7669	6	M.	" "	"
7711	48	M.	" "	"
7752	31	M.	" "	"

